THE LORD'S PRAYER

LAST SERMONS OF JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE

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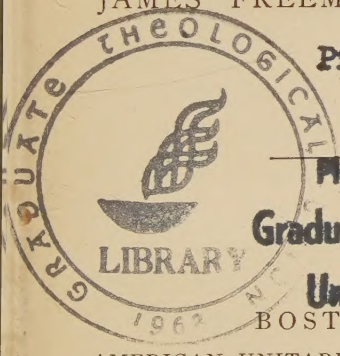
THE LORD'S PRAYER.

BEING THE LAST

Eight Discourses

OF

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE.



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THE LORD'S PRAYER.

I.

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.

Lord, teach us to pray — Luke xi. 1.

THE Lord's Prayer, given by Jesus to his disciples at their request, stands at the head of the worship of mankind. It is repeated by children at their mother's knee; it is uttered in the faltering accents of age; it soothes the ear of the dying; it comforts the solitary mourner; it is chanted every day in the liturgies of nations. However often this prayer may be repeated, it never grows old, is never left behind in the advance of thought. It is as dear to the heart of the sage as to the most ignorant of mankind. The sinner, who dares not utter any words of his own, gathers peace from the words which remain in his heart from his innocent childhood. Divine form, which has no formality; endless repetition, always fresh and new!

What is the secret of this? What keeps the Lord's Prayer always new to our minds and hearts?

First, it contains nothing local or temporary. It has nothing about Jew or Gentile; nothing about the Messiah, the Law of Moses, or the Prophets. We could not learn from its contents whether it originated in Judea or Greece, in India or Egypt. It meets universal needs, longings which are the same in every age and clime. Meant for mankind, it is purely human, and thus avoids the limitations which would make it less universal.

Again, the prayer illustrates Jesus' own declaration that those who worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth. The prayer must be "in truth," — that is, honest and sincere. We must pray for what we really wish, not for what we think we *ought* to wish. We must pray unselfishly, in spirit; and we must pray sincerely, in truth. The Lord's Prayer is an unselfish prayer, for its central request is that God's kingdom may come on earth. It asks, indeed, for daily bread, — for all the strength and heart we need every day; but this is not selfish, if such strength and heart are to be used in the cause of

truth and good. Nor is it selfish to ask to be kept from temptation and evil, if we express thus our sense of dependence on God for the power of doing right and escaping wrong. Therefore this is a prayer in spirit, and also in truth.

And it contains all that is essential in prayer. It asks for the universal reign of love and truth; it asks for a heaven below, like the heaven above; it asks also that we shall be so fed and purified and upheld that we may do our part loyally and well toward this consummation; it asks for daily strength for daily needs, and leaves all else to God.

We are sometimes told that every sentence in the Lord's Prayer is to be found in the sayings of Jewish rabbis uttered before the time of Jesus. This is not strictly correct, though similar expressions are no doubt to be found in such prayers. But this does not touch the originality of the Lord's Prayer; for originality does not consist in the novelty of an expression, but in its vitality. Shakespeare took the story of his plays from Italian novelists and Danish historians; but he created them anew, and endowed them with immortality. The Lord, we are told, made man out of the dust of the earth; but He breathed into his

nostrils the breath of life. So if Jesus formed his prayer from the dust of rabbinical tradition, he breathed into it the breath of life, and it became an immortal soul.

Jesus objected to the "long prayers" of the Jews and "the vain repetitions" of the heathen. This prayer avoids both errors; it is short, and it contains no repetitions. But neither his precept nor his example has prevented his followers from relapsing into both faults. The Puritans prayed by the hour-glass, one or two hours at a time: and I recollect that in our own churches one of the prayers in public worship was known as "The Long Prayer," and it would have been considered an impropriety if it were materially shortened. We also have repetitions in Christian prayers. The "Ave Maria" in the Rosary is commanded to be repeated a hundred times, and even the Lord's Prayer itself is to be repeated fifteen times. The evil of such repetitions is that the words are regarded as formulas, and supposed to have a kind of magical power apart from their meaning. They are then not offered in spirit nor in truth; they are not the prayer of the spirit nor of the understanding.

Jesus also preferred prayer which was not

public, — "Thou, when thou prayest, go into thy closet." His reason was that public prayer is often made to be heard of men, whereas if a man prays in his closet that motive certainly is excluded. All thought of human approbation or censure disappears when he is alone with God. You recollect the description by a newspaper critic of a prayer as being the most eloquent one ever addressed to a Boston audience. This shows, not that public prayer is wrong, but that there is always this danger of praying to be heard by men, and losing from our minds the sense of a divine presence and an infinite object.

Since Jesus gave this form of prayer to his disciples, it shows that a form of prayer is not necessarily wrong; but as Dean Stanley remarks, he did not bind his disciples to its exclusive use. He did not say, "Pray in these words," but "Pray in this manner." And as if to show that it is its spirit and not its letter that is important, we have two differing forms of it, — one in Matthew and one in Luke. In one we read, "Give us this day our daily bread;" in the other, "Give us, day by day, our daily bread." In one it is, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;" in the other, "Forgive us our sins, for we

also forgive every one that is indebted to us." And the English and American Liturgy varies from both: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us," which has become the most usual form, though not having any authority in Scripture. And the closing ascription, "For thine is the kingdom," is not in Luke nor in the oldest manuscripts of Matthew, and is omitted in the Revised Version and by the Roman Catholic Church. We obey Jesus by praying "after this manner;" but we do not adhere to the letter as though it were a charm. This distinction between the spirit and letter is, as Dean Stanley says, the salt which saves all religion from superstition and from corruption.

The prayers uttered in the childhood of the race, when their gods were dwelling near, having their haunts in the piny mountain, by the stream, forest, or watery depth; when the Lares and Penates were residents in every house, near the domestic hearth, — prayers to these gods, near at hand, with human qualities good and evil, were easy and natural. They were invisible beings, but close by. Men placated them with gifts, offered to them sacrifices, sought the protection of their national gods against their enemies.

But now it is different. Science has widened the boundaries of the universe; and as we learn the immensity of the creation, as we see more of the greatness of the Creator, we seem farther removed from him. Our reverence for the Most High increases, but our childlike trust in his personal love is diminished. We have eliminated from our conception of God the finite human qualities once attributed to him. He no longer walks in the garden in the cool of the day, no longer can have his anger appeased by sacrifices; we cannot plead with him as Lot did for the people of Sodom. He has ceased to be an arbitrary sovereign, doing what he chooses, changing his mind, having his special favorites. He has become an unchanging law of wisdom and goodness, not to be altered in his purposes by tears or supplication. Why tell him our needs? He knows them beforehand? How dare to ask for anything but what he chooses to send us, when we are so ignorant of the vast purposes of the universe? Thus an increasing reverence for the Infinite Wisdom checks prayer in its source. Thus an increasing sense of our ignorance of God's ways holds us silent before him. We can be patient and submit to the divine will; we can

adore his majesty, from whom and through whom and to whom are all things. We can repeat Pope's universal prayer and say: —

> "Thou great first cause, least understood,
> Who all my sense confined
> To know but this, — that thou art good,
> And that myself am blind."

We can say with Dr. Johnson: —

> "From thee, great God, we spring; to thee we tend, —
> Path, motive, guide, original, and end!"

And so prayer becomes adoration, reverence, submission, but ceases to be communion. We have come to feel that —

> "All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
> Whose body Nature is, and God the soul."

I am persuaded that this increasing sense of the ineffable greatness of God is that which makes prayer now more difficult; but at this point Jesus comes to reveal another aspect of the Deity, as a personal friend of every child. He is the Father of the prodigal son, whom he sees while yet a great way off, no less than of the obedient son who is always with him. Through him we have access to the Father. That is the spirit put into our heart, which enables us to say,

"Abba, Father!" Thus we, who were afar off when we saw God only as the Infinite Source of all things, become nigh to him, and can commune with him. Jesus calls himself "The Door" through which the human race can again come near to God. He makes himself simply a door, an open way to his Father and our Father, — a door opening into the deepest depths of the divine love. Nature is a door opening into the universal divine presence pervading the universe. That door can never again be closed. We can never go back to the early limitations and simple prayers of the childhood of the race. Humanity has become a man, and has put away childish things. But we can unite these two great conceptions of God as the All-in-All around us, and as dwelling inwardly in every soul. So Paul united them. When he looked out on creation, he almost lost sight of God as an inspiration of the soul. When he looked in, he almost lost sight of the universal presence in a sense of the intimate relation of child to father. He was almost a pantheist when he said that God was "the All-in-All," and that "from him and through him and to him are all things." He almost became a believer in the special favoritism

of the Almighty when he said that he himself and his disciples were predestined and chosen to be Christians before the foundation of the world. But his profound insight saved him from both errors, and enabled him to join to the conception of the God in whom we live and move and have our being the supplementary view of a life hid with Christ in the heart of Deity.

And also in the Lord's Prayer both these aspects of the truth are united. It begins with the adoration of one who is above us, our Father in Heaven; and with reverence for his holiness and infinite greatness; and with faith in his kingdom coming, not to a few believers, but as the united obedience of all mankind. Then it asks for the daily bread of life, the sense of pardoning love, the gift to every soul of that inflowing influence which shall enable it to resist temptation and conquer evil. Thus this prayer can never be superseded, since it accepts all the knowledge which science can give of God in Nature, and all that devout experience can manifest to us of the other knowledge of God in the soul.

The essence of prayer is the sense of an ever-present divine love, always waiting to be gracious. When we attain to this feeling, it is not

necessary to repeat formulas, or to put our needs into words. To desire such help is to pray without ceasing; and with this conviction and desire we grow more certain of the reality of the divine influence. God comes nearer to us inwardly day by day. We find that when we are weak then we are strong.

There is no miracle in this, nothing exceptional or unnatural. It is the most natural thing in the world that the Spirit of God should enter every soul that is open to him. He fills our empty hearts with a sense of his divine presence and his divine love.

With this view of prayer, as "the soul's sincere desire," it may become a vital element in human progress. If, as Mr. Emerson says, "Power and aim are the two halves of human felicity," then conscience, which keeps us to a pure aim, and prayer, which feeds us inwardly with power, will make the highest joy and peace of the soul. Prayer, then, really gives us daily bread. Whenever a difficult duty comes, we look up and receive strength; when we are in doubt, we look up for a moment, and light comes to us; when assailed by temptation, we look up, and the glow which attracted us disappears, and we

stand unmoved. Prayer is essentially for daily work, — for home, shop, schoolhouse, lawyer's office, the legislative assembly, the mechanic's bench.

Prayer in church is well; but how small a portion of our lives does that cover! Prayer-meetings are well; but they do not satisfy the true thirst for God. The real home of prayer is in each separate soul; and its true sphere is in every place, every work, every occupation where we find ourselves. The man of prayer is not the one who goes into a monastery or a hermit's cell to pray so many hours a day, but he whose spirit and heart are in such communion with God that it is natural for him to look in and up while he is occupied with the stress of work or the contests of competition. This is to "pray without ceasing."

How simple does religion become when reduced to these two essential facts, — first, the purpose of seeking for all that is true and good and right; and, secondly, the reliance on an ever-present help to gain what we seek! This is the life we all can live through faith in the Son of God. The child who wishes to control his temper, the schoolboy working at his task, the mother in her

household and nursery, the man of business in his office, — all can have this strength, and so have the most essential and vital element of prayer. Not, indeed, in a moment; for all things come to us by degrees. That which at first is foreign from our habits may at last become habitual, and that which is hard to believe, at last self-evident; and with such a habit of inward prayer fully established, we are lifted into a realm of genuine peace, where there are no more impossible duties, no more crushing cares. Such a state we can attain; and what better can we desire for ourselves and others than this?

II.

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.

When ye pray say, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.—Matt. vi. 9.

JESUS tells us that when we pray we are to say, "Our Father." This indicates the attitude of mind we are to have in prayer, that is, a childlike attitude. It is not merely to use the words, "Our Father," but it is to have the trust and confidence of a child. In other attitudes of mind we may look upon the Deity in different ways. When we philosophize about God, we may call him the Supreme Being; we may think of him as the First Cause, as the order and support of creation. When we attempt to do our duty, we may think of him as the Fountain of Right, as giving the law to conscience, as Sovereign Ruler to be obeyed implicitly. But when we pray, we must say, "Our Father;" that is, we must become as little children, having the child's spirit of confidence and trust.

Jesus says, "Except ye be converted" (that is, except ye turn round), and become little children again, "ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." For to enter the kingdom of heaven requires the trust of a child. The relation of a child to its father and mother is the natural type, the foreordained symbol, of the relation of God's children to himself. Observe for a moment the attitude of little children to their father and mother. The father and mother may be distinguished people or obscure; they may be wise, learned, eminent; but all this is nothing to the child. Others may look upon its parents with deference and respect, but to the child they are simply "Papa" and "Mamma;" others may be grateful for benefits received, but the child knows nothing of benefits or obligation, — he only knows love. It would be a little absurd for a child to thank his parents regularly for their care and protection, or to express his sense of their goodness in any formal way. He simply loves them, and tells them everything in his heart. His innocent prattle is his prayer. We notice, therefore, that in the Lord's Prayer there is no expression of thanksgiving for divine blessings; not that the sense of gratitude is not im-

portant, but that it belongs more to meditation than to the highest form of prayer. When we consider the goodness of God in order to be duly grateful, we are contemplating his character, and so stand a little apart from him. The first words of the Lord's Prayer determine thus at once the position of the soul toward God.

Next comes the clause, "Who art in heaven." If we understand by heaven a distant place or a wholly superior condition; if we think of it as far above us and far away from our common life, — this again would tend to separate us from God. But according to Jesus heaven is always close at hand, and the kingdom of heaven is near by. *Heaven is love;* and when we love, we are with God, and God is with us. The Apostle John says: "He who dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him." Jesus says: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The heaven where God is, is close by; and we may enter it at any moment by the open door of a childlike love. The New Testament speaks of our sitting in heavenly places even now with Jesus. It is also said that "no man hath ascended into heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who *is in* heaven." This teaches

us two facts: One, that Jesus when he came down from heaven was still in heaven, just as a thought which comes out from our mind and is spoken to others still remains *in* the mind. Jesus therefore was in heaven all the time that he was on the earth, for he was in communion with God and with divine love. The other thought in this passage seems to be that no one can ascend into heaven except he have heaven within himself, as Jesus had. So Wordsworth says of the little child that it comes out of heaven, which is its natural home, though the world about it tends continually to make it forget the "imperial palace whence it came."

God is in heaven; but heaven is around us as well as above us, and therefore we can be with him at any moment. Yet he is not only with us, but also above us, and we need to lift up our hearts in reverence when we think of him; therefore Jesus added the next clause, "Hallowed be thy name." We are thus reminded of the holiness, the purity, and the perfection of the Heavenly Father. Thus our communion with him, though full of trust and confidence, is also filled with reverence and what the Scripture calls "godly fear." This does not mean being afraid,

but having love tempered with awe. This reverence is that which lifts the soul to a higher plane, enables us to catch a glimpse of the Supreme Goodness, purifies the passions, corrects selfish desires, and brings us into the spirit of Jesus. Reverence for supreme wisdom makes us patient in trial, makes us trust where we cannot understand. Looking up to a supreme goodness tends to fill the heart with the love of goodness, and enlarges the soul so that it shall not be controlled by any small egotism or petty vanity, and it keeps us in relation with the divine truth and perfect duty.

We have all known or heard of those whose piety appeared perfectly sincere and ardent, but whose spirit and conduct did not seem improved by their religion. The most cruel slaveholders at the South were often the loudest in prayer at home and in the conference meeting. We have heard repeatedly during the last few years of Sunday-school superintendents and Christians active in the Church who have become defaulters, and have stolen the money of widows and orphans confided to their care. There are those who keep the Sabbath with scrupulous zeal and stand high in the Church, whose temper is

harsh, who are tyrants in their home, and hard in money matters. We call these men hypocrites, but often they are not hypocrites. They are ignorant of their own character. They are self-deceived, and that because they do not keep before their minds the holiness which God requires. They do not hallow the name of the Father, and so their conscience is not educated in the practice of goodness. They are sound in the faith according to popular standards; they say to Jesus, "Lord, Lord," but do not remember to follow his example. And thus the Church is sometimes regarded as little better than the world.

It is strange and sad to notice in the history of the Church how often the plainest commands of Jesus have been openly disregarded. When the disciples wished to call down fire from heaven to destroy the villages of the inhospitable inhabitants, Jesus said: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man has come, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And yet the Church during hundreds of years burned heretics at the stake, and called it "an act of faith." When the disciples forbade a man to cast out demons because he followed

not with them, Jesus said: "Forbid him not, for he who is not against us is with us." And yet Christian sects, all trying in their different ways to cast out the demons of evil, are unwilling to co-operate with those who do not follow their particular creed or ritual. Jesus said the tree is known by its fruits, and if the fruit is good we must believe the tree to be also good; but Christians have too often reversed this maxim, and have judged the fruit by the tree. The goodness of infidels or heretics they stigmatize as "mere morality," and condemn or hold aloof from the best movements if not done in their own way. What they need is to say from their heart, "Hallowed be thy name." Reverence for divine goodness would teach them to love all goodness, wherever found, among their fellow-men. It would correct their narrow prejudices, and lift them into the great spirit of the Master.

But the opposite fact is also equally true. To reverence God, we must first reverence man. The profound insight of the Apostle John brought him to this conclusion when he formulated the memorable statement, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" We climb to

the heights of heavenly piety from the low-lying plain of human charity. We can only become acquainted with goodness by seeing it as it is manifested in our fellow-men. The innocence of the little child enables us to see something of a higher purity above. The self-sacrificing devotion of a good man to the law of right gives us a hint of the divine justice. The generosity in man which goes out of self in sympathy with his neighbor is a suggestion of the inexhaustible love of the Heavenly Father. The idea of goodness dawns on the soul from the sight of human fidelity, honesty, truth. It is by this stairway, composed of earthly goodness, genuine though imperfect, that our thought and heart go up to the sight of the infinite good.

It follows from this law that everything which makes us doubt or deny human goodness prevents us from hallowing the name of God. The cynicism which prides itself on finding a selfish motive for every good action, the worldly wisdom which works with mercenary and low arguments for its ends, shuts the heart against the sight of what is good in man. This wisdom of the world does not see the inspiration which comes down from heaven, — the tenderness of human sym-

pathy, the patience of the poor, the courage of conviction, the martyr's faith, the apostolic vision. From the sight of this cynical, criticising, contemptuous view of man all his nobler qualities disappear; and with them disappears also the power of recognizing the goodness and the love of God. He who hardens his heart against man hardens his heart also against God.

This is why we ought to look for good rather than evil in our fellow-men. We find that for which we habitually seek. If we look for faults, follies, and sins, no doubt we may find them; nor is it necessary to close our eyes to the fact of human error and evil; but let us have faith that evil is not the essential thing in man, that he is more weak than wicked, a creature of impulse and passion, swayed by circumstances, often overpowered by temptation, but not deliberately preferring evil to good. Burns well says, "What 's done we partly may compute, but know not what 's resisted."

If all human goodness is a partial revelation of the goodness of God, we find the highest revelation in the highest souls. Jesus thus becomes to us the best revelation of God. In him we find united and harmonized perfect truth and

perfect love. Far above us in his entire devotion to the will of God, he is all our own in his tenderness and compassion as a brother man. Dwelling in the atmosphere of divine love, he spent his days in seeking and saving those who were lost. Not by outward rank or position, but by these harmonies of soul and character, he has become the best revelation of the truth and love of God.

And thus we hallow the name of God, not by epithets of adoration or words of praise, but by taking just views of his character. We cannot hallow his name if we think of him as arbitrary, wilful, or as essentially sovereign power. We cannot hallow his name if we think of him as vindictive or full of wrath against sinners. We cannot hallow his name if we suppose any conflict between his attributes, and imagine that his justice must be reconciled to his mercy by some transcendental compromise. In him justice and mercy are the same, and he is at once law and love.

This clause in the Lord's Prayer, then, invites us to look up and adore, — not in the letter, but in the spirit; not in words, but in reality. When Job in his misery refused to call himself a sinner

until he could understand wherein he had sinned; when he refused to use words of wind to please the Almighty, but held fast to his integrity and honesty, — he hallowed the name of God far more than the comforters who told him to confess his wickedness whether he could see it or not, in order to be relieved from his sufferings. What the Lord asks of us when we would hallow his name is not words of adoration, but the spirit of truth, honesty, generosity, fidelity. For if these things be in you and abound, they will cause that you be neither barren nor unfruitful in prayer or in life.

III.

THY KINGDOM COME.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. — MATT. vi. 10.

THIS is the central petition of the Lord's Prayer, and the most important of all. It is full of hope for the human race. It teaches no doctrine of inability or depravity, but leads us to believe and expect a time when good will conquer evil, when peace will take the place of war, when sin and sorrow will find a God of pardon and comfort, and the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

There are days in our lives even now when we enter for a moment into this state, and see God's kingdom come to us. There are moments in which we feel happy in the sense of a divine presence within us and around us; in which the love of God seems to dwell in our hearts; in which we are at peace with ourselves and others; in which the mystery of all this unintelligible

world is lightened. In such moments we do not wish to pray, but only to offer to God the silent thanksgiving of joy. When the father and mother have been gone on a journey, and return, their children run to their arms, not to ask for anything, or to say any word of thanks, but rather to enjoy the happy sense of being again together. So when we feel the presence of God, we do not need to pray to him or to thank him; it is enough that we are *with* him.

What *is* "God's kingdom," which we pray may come? "The kingdom of God," says the apostle, "is not meat nor drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." It is the reign of goodness on earth, of truth and love, of honesty, generosity, purity, temperance, patience.

This one central petition in the Master's prayer would, if we kept to its meaning and spirit, correct false aims or false prayers, and keep us always in close union with him.

Many people suppose that the kingdom of God is only in the other world; they hope to go to heaven hereafter, but do not expect heaven to come here. This world, they think, is only evil, and always must be so; it is the Devil's world,

and not God's world. Thus their highest hope is to *go* to heaven; they never expect heaven to come to them.

But Jesus in his prayer went up to a far higher realm of thought than this. Heaven was wherever God's will is done; and his great wish and purpose, the great aim of his life, was that God's will should be done here in this world. He saw the cruelties and wickedness of this world, the sins of men, the crimes, calamities, disasters, which surround us. Yet he cherished the unfaltering hope that this world might and must become heaven; that good might and must overcome evil; that crime, vice, sin, are transient, and only good is permanent. This hope for man he has embodied in our daily prayer. He has taught us to pray for this arrival of all-conquering goodness. He has taught the world to say every day that God's will can be done here as perfectly as in the highest realm of spiritual bliss; that there are no angels or archangels anywhere in the universe who are more pure and holy than men may become in this world.

It is wonderful, this great faith which Jesus had for the world. It is plain, too, that we have not yet reached it. The majority of his Church

still look forward only to a heaven beyond this life, and not to any heaven here. They say the words of the prayer, but they do not believe that which the words imply. They are not working for this end, but for another. They are striving earnestly and zealously to save souls from a future hell and to secure for them a future heaven; but they have little hope that heaven will ever be established in this world, — that God's kingdom will ever come here.

Suppose the Christian Church should really believe what it says in its daily prayer, — believe that the kingdom of God can come here, is meant to come here, and that God's will can be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Suppose this should be the chief aim and effort of the Church, — to put an end to war, to cruelty, to all wrong-doing; to make men honest, generous, pure, truthful, loving. If the Church should devote its main energy, as Jesus did, to seek the lost and to save them from their present evils; to bind the wounds of the broken-hearted here; to give sight to the blind, feet to the lame, comfort to the sorrowful, help to the poor; to lead those who have gone astray back into the right paths; to make all men feel that God is in

our midst to-day, that his infinite love is around us now, that Christ is with us here in this earthly life, that his heart is longing to save the world from its present sins, — if the Church believed this, would not the kingdom of God come and his will be done? With the whole power of the Church put forth in this direction, how soon might we not see these divine results?

The religious world believes in a kingdom of heaven, in a reign of God; but hereafter, not here. There are others who do care for this world, who do desire to become good men and women here. I think that while the great body of people are seeking for a future heaven, there are many who believe in moral growth, spiritual education, ethics, and culture, and are seeking a present salvation. They seek to be saved now from ignorance into knowledge, from vice and evil here into temperance and virtue, from moral depravity into moral purity, from worldliness into spiritual life.

So far, so well. The only difficulty about this purpose is that it tends toward an exclusively individual goodness. Self-culture is a noble aim, but it also has its danger. Its danger lies in the direction of isolation. He who devotes himself

mainly to self-education, to culture, to the development of his own tastes, character, powers, runs the risk of forgetting others. He believes in each man doing his own duty, thinking his own thoughts, seeking truth independently, and learning self-dependence. While some seek to save men from a future hell by bringing them into their church, converting them, teaching them a sound creed, persuading them to partake of the sacraments, others, devoted to self-culture and personal improvement, do very little of missionary work. Their aim is an individual one; it is self-education, personal morality. But, as I said, this tends to loneliness, isolation, individualism. It takes us away from human sympathies, from hope for the race into hope for ourselves. We do not pray that God's kingdom may come to all mankind, and his will be done on the whole earth, but that his kingdom may come to ourselves, and that we may do his will as we ought to do it.

We need a universal church, a kingdom of heaven. It is not enough to work alone for our private salvation, for our personal delivery from hell into heaven; it is not enough to seek personal good or personal culture alone. We need

union with God and the race; to float in the current of universal life. The doctrine of self-culture is too cold and unloving to satisfy the soul, and is apt to leave out dependence.

Even philanthropy, great and noble as it is, needs the inspiration of religion. It needs religious faith and hope to enable it to meet the disappointments and to overcome the difficulties which are sure to come. One becomes discouraged when not upheld by a great current of religious sympathy. If we have that, then, as Dryden says, "We swim with the tide, and the stream makes us buoyant." This is the great advantage of a church, that it joins together in sympathy and mutual help those who are endeavoring to do something for their fellow-men.

The four words which include all this and make a good creed are these: "From God, for man," — "from God," as an inspiration and perpetual support, who gives power to us in our weakness, and light in our darkness, who animates and uplifts the soul by his ever-present spirit; and "for man," doing as Jesus did, helping where we can, be it more or less, giving two mites when we can do no more, making the world around us a little better and happier by

our influence. "From God, for man," — this is creed enough for any church, aim enough for any life; this is pure and undefiled religion before God the Father; this is the love which brings peace to the soul, makes this world happy, and prepares the way for something better beyond.

In seeking to make God's kingdom come in this world, Jesus was introducing no new idea to his countrymen. The Jewish Scriptures have little to say about the future life, but a great deal to say of the reign of goodness and peace which is to come here. The "kingdom of heaven" meant to them, as to Jesus, the reign of God in this world. They expected, however, that it would be, not only a religious kingdom, but a political kingdom also, and give them again their national independence. Their Messiah was to be a political leader. This idea Jesus opposed, and declared that it would involve the destruction of their nation. He failed in convincing them, and their nation was destroyed.

Therefore when we say, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we express our faith that the God of love and power is in this world now, and is coming nearer to it

evermore; that good is to conquer evil, right to put down wrong, truth to rise supreme over all falsehood and sin. We express our hope that this coming of God's kingdom may be helped by our efforts and our prayers. We realize that this is the chief end of every Christian life; that we are disciples of Christ first of all to help God's kingdom to come, not to save our own soul, not to cultivate our minds, not to build churches, sacraments, or creeds. All these are good, but not the first or chief good. If we make these the first and chief end, there is danger of shallowness or selfishness or formality. But let it be our object to help on the reign of righteousness, the peace of God, and the gospel of love; then all other things will come in their place.

In order to utter this prayer in spirit and truth, we must cherish and increase our faith in God as being in this world and near to all our hearts, our faith that he is interested in every effort we make to give truth, justice, and love the victory over evil. We must consider ourselves his soldiers, to fight on the good side in every cause, resisting our cowardice, indolence, and fear of the world. If our aim in life is to be on the side of all goodness and truth, because

it is the side of God and will prevail at last, then we can say sincerely, "Thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Then we shall do works of love to men without becoming empty of inward life; then we shall have piety without forms or ceremonies; then we shall be able to cultivate everything noble within us and not grow selfish or cold toward others; then will be realized the promise of the Master, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things needful else shall be added to you."

IV.

DAILY BREAD.

Give us this day our daily bread. — MATT. vi. 11.

WE now come to another petition of the Lord's Prayer. When we begin the prayer by saying "Our Father," we assume the Christian attitude of childlike trust and confidence. We begin as children of God speaking to our best friend. "Hallowed be thy name" adds to this sentiment of trust that of reverence. God is not only near us to be loved, but also above us to be venerated. We are speaking to infinite purity and holiness, and what we say must also be pure and holy. "Thy kingdom come" carries us at once out of self and personal wants into wide sympathy and longing for good to others; this petition takes selfishness out of our heart and prayer. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" adds to faith hope, and enables us to look forward to a sure triumph of good over evil. Having thus taken for our purpose to help by prayer and work the coming

of God's kingdom, we now ask for the strength necessary for that work. Bread represents this; it stands for strength, — "bread that strengthens man's heart;" it stands for outward and inward strength, — strength of body and soul. This clause in the prayer puts us in the attitude of dependence, shows us that we need strength from above for our daily work; that all we have, health, energy, will, power, is from on high. First, then, we have the sentiment of childlike trust in God; next of reverence for him; then of unselfish desire for others, or love; then of hope; and next of dependence. "Give us this day our daily bread" seems a perfectly plain and intelligible petition, and yet there are one or two questions to be asked in regard to it. One of these questions is, What is included in the word "bread"? The other question is, What is meant by the word "daily"?

Let us consider first the meaning of "daily" bread. It so happens that the Greek word translated "daily" is one which occurs nowhere else in all the thirteen hundred works of Greek literature which have come down to us. It has been considered to mean, not only "daily" bread, but also "necessary" bread, "spiritual"

bread, "supersubstantial" bread, bread "necessary for subsistence," and even "to-morrow's" bread, — which last phrase contradicts Christ's command to let the morrow take thought for the things of itself.

"Daily bread" means, I think, necessary bread, — whatever is necessary to give us strength for our work in the world.

This petition, when we utter it, implies and renews the conviction that without God we are nothing; that our life flows into us evermore from him. But to get its full significance we must unite it with that other saying of Jesus that "man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." When we ask for "daily bread," we ask for all things necessary to enable us to live happily, usefully, peacefully, in the day which is before us. Not only the body needs daily bread; but the mind, the heart, the spirit, need to be fed daily in order that we may live aright. If the body does not receive its daily food, it is starved; but even so the mind is starved which is not fed with truth and knowledge. If the body receives noxious instead of wholesome food, it is poisoned; thus the mind may be poisoned when fed

with errors. When we say, "Give us our daily bread," if we think only of the bodily food, we omit the most important part of the petition.

No doubt there are times and occasions in which this petition may be honestly offered in its literal sense. A large part of mankind are never quite sure of food for the day. Famine desolates large regions of the earth. Within a short time millions have been swept away by famine in India and China. The day-laborer in our own country depends for his bread on finding work; his prayer for daily bread is for daily work, and for health of body to enable him to do it.

When the father of a family takes his hat in the morning to go out and look for work, knowing that his children's supper depends on his finding it, I think he can pray the literal prayer. I think he may well say to God: "Heavenly Father, send me some work; send to me some opportunity of earning my children's bread. I am ready to do all I can; help me to some opportunity." I think and believe that in such a case, where he is doing his best, but in vain, he has a right to go with confidence to God; and I do most surely and certainly believe that without any violation of law, without any miracle,

but by the operation of subtile forces too fine to be known to our dull senses, something may be directed toward his need. I think that the man who prays thus before going out to seek for occupation will be more likely to find it than if he does not do so; for who knows how men are influenced to do this or that, how men are led in one direction or another, how the springs of our thoughts and life are touched by invisible forces descending from above?

Therefore as regards all outward things, — if they are necessary things, if we have real and true need of them, not for our own pleasure only, but for our life and that of others, for our own strength and power to do our duty to others and to perform what God gives us to do, — we may ask God for them. We may say: "Help us to find work to-day to feed our children. Help us to find the means of paying our debts. Help us to find some way to aid these sufferers who need our aid." Such prayers as these are honest prayers, and they may bring help; for we, who do not know how gravitation operates, who cannot tell how the elastic ether carries the light, do not know by what strange processes spiritual and material good may be propagated through the universe.

But it would not be an honest prayer to ask for bread for the body when we know that we have had a baking yesterday and that there are several loaves now in the house. It would not be an honest prayer to ask for some pecuniary means of helping our poor neighbor when we have in our purse the amount needed for his wants. But very often the bread we need is that which no money can buy; it is the bread of the soul we are to ask for. This is the bread we need every day, and without which we cannot do a single one of our duties as we ought to do it.

The bread of the soul is right feeling, right purpose, a state of mind above all low desire, a strong will to do right, a generous interest in others, a holy spirit which is the little leaven to sanctify every word, every act, every feeling, every thought, and make it a Christian thing, sweet to the mouth and to the heart. This is a kind of bread we need every day of our lives, a kind of bread we often cannot get for ourselves by any amount of effort; therefore, exactly the thing for which we have a right to pray. It is the savor of life, which we need in every act, thought, and word.

And so when we offer the Lord's Prayer let us always remember how much this petition includes. When a new day comes to us it brings with it unknown opportunities for good. A day may be very long, if it be filled with good thoughts and good acts; a day may be the turning-point in our lives. How shall we go forth to meet these mysterious moments which flow toward us from the future ready to crystallize around our actions and carry them away into an unchanging past? Only by being inwardly prepared; only by being in the right spirit, having the right purpose. When we say in the morning, "Give us our daily bread," we ask for the bread of strength, of hope, of patience, of faith, which we shall need every hour.

"Man does not live by bread only, but by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God." All living truth is bread from heaven. We need every day some sight of great truths to animate us in the routine of common thoughts. How good it is to meet a friend whose mind is full of ideas on important subjects! How it redeems the day from emptiness to read a good book, to recall a noble poem, to have an hour's

talk with those whose souls are interested in important things! This also is "daily bread" which we need and can hardly do without. Life is poor which is not inspired by these heavenly visions.

In order to do our duty well, we need a right spirit with which to do it. A man may be honest and truthful, but may spoil what he says by impatience, irritability, and want of tact. How often in discussions does the good side suffer from the faults of its advocates! They cannot bear contradiction, they get out of temper, and then their truth loses its power. If they had asked God to give them a good spirit; if they had prepared their souls beforehand by looking to him; if they had said, "Keep me patient, keep me loving, do not let my own conceit and vanity get the better of me," — all might have gone well. For this good influence from above to make our spirits tender and calm and strong and sweet is a better preparation than a head full of arguments.

For my own part, I believe it is a universal law, which prevails in the farthest nebula just as much as here on earth, that any one who is simply desirous of doing good or being right,

and who feels the need of the right spirit, can put himself in the attitude of reception; and if he waits on God to have his higher strength renewed, by that act and attitude opens a channel upward through which currents of divine life will enter his soul.

To pray for daily bread, then, is not to say any special words to God, but to put yourself into relation with him by positive acts of submission, trust, aspiration, dependence. A man may pray for daily bread without knowing it. If his soul is in the right attitude, that is prayer. He may use words or not; that is of less importance.

He who stands in the spiritual position of receptivity toward God and good-will toward man may be said to pray without ceasing, though he responds to no liturgy and goes to no prayer-meeting. In old times, when each fountain and river had its divinity, when every spring was haunted by a god, the Greek farmer prayed to the genius of the stream to feed his meadow with moisture. The present farmer, having no such theory, but believing in divine laws, takes his spade and digs a channel, and the water descends and irrigates his field.

All real prayer opens a channel to God; and while the channel is kept open, the laws of the universe guarantee to us, as to the farmer, that our meadow, like his, shall not be burned up by any summer drought.

The use of words in prayer is to keep the mind in this attitude. Words often have a great power to give direction to thought and feeling; they are the rudder by which we steer the ship. If there is no wind, the rudder cannot move the ship; but when it is moving, the rudder will guide it and keep it in the right course.

Therefore when we say, "Give us this day our daily bread," let us ask for what we really need. Our needs differ, as our temptations differ, according to our different characters, circumstances, trials. You may have daily temptations which are none to me; I may have those which are no temptation to you.

The besetting sin of one man may be impatience. Every little thing annoys him, irritates him, leads him to say sharp things. When he utters this prayer at the beginning of the day, the bread he needs is strength to control his irritability, to resist the impulse to speak hastily, to hold himself quiet till the rash humor has passed

by. If he has faith that God will give him this strength for asking, he will ask and receive; he will find the power growing up within him of self-control, and the demon of impatience will be at last cast out.

Another man's besetting temptation is anxiety. We, it is obvious, are descended from several generations who have had a hard fight with actual want; who have been obliged to practise all economies, and have only thus been able to keep themselves in comfort and civilization. They have often had to starve their bodies in order to educate their minds and those of their children. A tendency to anxiety, therefore, we have inherited, and it runs in our blood. More than this, the Puritanic views made religious anxiety a duty, and actually had "anxious seats" for those who were beginning the religious life, as if the gospel was not good news to all men, but rather a subject of alarm. The "daily bread," then, needed by many persons is hope, courage, and cheerfulness. For an anxious person can do nothing well; anxiety saps the springs of life.

We are all in want of some daily bread. We can all pray this prayer honestly, if we examine ourselves and watch ourselves to know what we

really need. "Watch and pray," says the Master; "watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

If we live in the Spirit, says the wise apostle, we shall also walk in the Spirit. And the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, and peace.

V.

FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS.

And forgive us our debts. — Matt. vi. 12.

THUS far in uttering the Lord's Prayer the soul has been placed in an attitude of faith, reverence, self-dedication, dependence ; now another chord is touched, — the sense of sin, the need of pardon.

This sense of sin is by a large class of thinkers rejected as a mere superstition, unworthy of the dignity of man. In fact, we may say that the tendency of thought in two schools, opposed in other things, is to reject this sense of sin as an excrescence nowise belonging to the true nature of man. Transcendentalists on one side, like Theodore Parker and Mr. Emerson, join with the whole school of materialists and sense-philosophers on the other in opposing such sentiments as outgrown puerilities, belonging to the childish things which we put away when we became men. Sin with them is only defect, underdevelopment. The school which considers all our

actions the result of necessity cannot accept sin in any other sense. Where there is no freedom, there can be no personal responsibility, and therefore no sin. The whole materialistic school and the school of positivists are compelled by their postulates to eliminate sin, and consequently forgiveness of sin, from all sound human experience. The transcendentalists often do the same, and, as it seems to me, with much less consistency; for this sense of sin is transcendental. It is knowledge of a right which transcends all that we are; it is the voice of a tribunal higher than ourselves, seated in our soul, by which we judge and sentence ourselves.

It is a wonderful fact, this universal sense of sin. Most religions rest on it, as on a chief corner-stone. All sacrifices for sin, expiatory offerings, attempts to appease the gods by self-inflicted tortures, spring from this strange human experience. Ritualism rests on it. Half the prayers of the world cry: "Culpa mea, culpa maxima mea," — "Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners." The hymns of Zoroaster and the Vedas, like those of modern Christendom, declare that we are "burdened with guilt, convinced of sin." This is a vast experience of the

human soul, which no sound philosophy and no human religion can afford to neglect or omit.

Moreover, this conviction of sin is the acknowledged source of the most heroic actions and the grandest virtues. If Luther had not been tortured by the sense of sin, he never could have created the Reformation. It lay at the root of the great movement which we call the Methodist Church. The religious saint and hero, before he can go up high, must go down low. Just as a castle rests on a foundation which is another building almost as massive as itself hidden under ground, and as every lofty tree has another tree of roots almost as large as itself turned in the opposite direction and buried below the soil, so every grand life which soars up to heaven in faith, love, and work rests on former profound struggles, deep humility, biting self-condemnation, and self-distrust. Mr. Lecky, the historian of European morals, says: "The sense of human dignity and the sense of sin are to be traced in almost every great moral movement mankind has passed through. . . . The most splendid actions have been performed under the exclusive influence of either, but both must concur to the well-being of society."

I do not mean that the sense of sin is an experience in which we are to remain, but rather one we are to pass through. It takes different forms, — as self-struggle, as discontent with all we do or have done, as longing for something higher; but under whatever form it comes, or by whatever name known, it means that man has a law within him higher than himself, by which he judges his past, and by which alone he becomes capable of progress and improvement. But somehow, before he can work easily, he must obtain peace; he must be able to rise above his past defects. He must first know his own sins, and then see that they need not hold him back; and this is the forgiveness of sin.

There are three ways by which men have tried to obtain the forgiveness of sin beside the Christian way. These are the way of superstition, the way of ritual, and the way of dogma.

Superstition rests on the idea of an angry God, and says: "Appease the gods by sacrifices. Give the gods, who are displeased, the best things you have, — your wealth, your children, your own comfort. Punish yourself enough, and they will not punish you. Cut yourself with knives, live a hermit in the desert, eat roots, give

all you have to the Church." This is the way of superstition, which sees in God an offended judge, and tries to placate him with humiliation and self-sacrifice.

The second is the way of ritual. This was the Jewish method, which has been transplanted into Christianity just as the superstitious method has also been transplanted into Christianity. Jewish ritualism said: "If any one has committed an offence, let him bring a sin-offering or a trespass-offering, and give it to the priest, and he will be forgiven;" and as the simple fact of his bringing this offering implied a confession of his fault and penitence for it and faith in a divine forgiveness, there is no doubt that this ritualism *did* bring good to the soul until it ran itself out into empty forms and mere outward ceremonies with no life in them.

The third is the way of dogma; that teaches forgiveness by vicarious suffering. "All sin," it says, "deserves punishment. Sin cannot be pardoned until it is punished; but since Christ came and was punished in the sinner's place, the sinner, if he repents and trusts in this dogma, can be forgiven." And no doubt as long as men were able to believe this doctrine they could get

much comfort out of it; but the time has come when it can be no longer believed, and something higher must take its place.

But what do we mean by asking God to forgive us our sins? The old theology knew what it meant. People a hundred years ago knew what it meant, — or thought they did. They had been taught these two doctrines, — one, that God was a God of wrath; that he was angry with the wicked every day; that he was a consuming fire. Preachers wearied their imagination in drawing pictures of the fury of the Almighty against sinners. That was one thing. To ask for forgiveness was to deprecate his wrath, and to beseech him for the sake of his dear Son not to be angry very sore. That was one thing they meant when they said, "Forgive us."

But now we cannot honestly pray that prayer. We have risen to a higher conception of the character of God. We do not, any of us, honestly believe in God's anger. He cannot be angry. Anger is the passion of the feeble. It is a sign of weakness to be angry. When we are carried away by anger, we feel ashamed of ourselves afterward. Whoever is angry puts himself in the wrong. It is impossible for the

Infinite Being, who sees the end from the beginning, to be angry with his creatures. All the images in the Bible which speak of God's anger must be only figures of speech, meaning that he disapproves of certain actions, and that there is a divine hostility of right to wrong, an eternal separation between the two; that, therefore, we alienate ourselves from God by wrong-doing. To ask God not to be angry in any other sense is to show our ignorance of the Infinite Calm which presides over all nature and all life.

The other notion formerly held of forgiveness was that it meant a remission of punishment; but now we see that punishment is only the working of inevitable law. There is nothing arbitrary in punishment. As a man soweth, so shall he reap. Punishment is beneficent; it is the natural and wholesome consequence of wrong action; its purpose is to cure. It would be an unkindness in God to forgive, if forgiveness means the removal of this wholesome discipline.

Punishment is a part of our education. The inevitable consequences of our actions teach us to know the conditions of our life. Would it be well, when the child puts its finger in the fire, that God should remit the penalty and pain of

that mistake? No; for then the child would not have learned a useful lesson. To ask the eternal law to forgive would be to derange the most beneficent activities of creation.

What, then, do we mean by forgiveness, if we do not mean to ask God not to be angry, and do not mean to ask him to remit the punishment of sin? In our present state of knowledge we cannot ask for forgiveness in either of these senses. These would not be honest prayers. What, then, do we mean?

The greatest evil of doing wrong — that is, of violating our own ideal of duty — is that it separates us from the love of God. God is not separated from us, but we are separated from him. We are turned away from him, and so lose sight of his fatherly tenderness. We are like the prodigal son who went into a far country and left his father's house behind. This is the chief evil of wrong-doing, that it leaves us in a world without God, without prayer, without providence. Whenever we wilfully do wrong, we become for the time practical atheists; and practical atheism is very much worse than speculative atheism. A man may deny God in word, but yet remain inwardly in relation with the great spirit of the

universe. We may call God Nature, and worship Nature, or law, and yet be in loving communion with the vast order, bounty, wisdom, which is ever flowing through space and time. But he who violates his conscience puts himself out of harmony with truth, justice, and goodness; he has turned his soul away from God.

When we say, "Forgive us our trespasses," we are asking for something very real and very necessary; we ask that we may not, by our own selfishness and folly, our own untruth and wilfulness, lose sight of the face of our Father; we ask to be kept in relation to the infinite tenderness and love, to be brought back, if we have gone away, into our Father's house. It is an act of repentance and trust, by which we return to God to renew our strength. We do not ask God not to be angry, for we know that no such cloud can ever rest on the face of the Divine Sun; we do not ask to escape punishment, for we know that to suffer the outward consequences of our wrong-doing may be necessary and desirable; but we ask to be helped out of the inward consequences of wrong-doing, the darkness of the soul which has lost sight of its Infinite Friend, and which is wandering alone in a universe without God and without hope.

To say this prayer is to confess that we are not what we ought to be; it is to avoid the attitude of pride and self-satisfaction; it is to place ourselves by the side of our fellow-men in the consciousness that every day we are in danger of losing sight of God and of his truth and love; it is to take the wholesome discipline of self-distrust, not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. For "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

There are many people who carry about with them every day this burden of unforgiven sin, and perhaps do not know it, who would be made happy if they could only honestly say this prayer. They have an inward feeling of unrest, of discomfort, which they do not know how to account for, to which, perhaps, they become accustomed, and think it something not to be escaped from; they never feel contented with their own efforts or their own work; they are weighed down by too keen a sense of responsibility; they never have any real peace in their souls; they are conscientious, but there is no joy in their goodness;

to will is present with them, but how to perform that which they will, they find not. How happy they would be if they knew that they could really be forgiven every day, if they could bring all their imperfections and all their weakness and lay them down before God's footstool, and let him make them at peace with themselves! Then they would have a happiness in their religion unknown before.

There are, I suppose, many people in the world who have never known for a moment in their lives the joyful sense of being forgiven their sins. They do not forgive themselves a single fault, and cannot hope that God will do so; they do not think they have any right to be forgiven. They read the parable of the prodigal son, and never apply it to themselves; they believe that God will forgive great sins, but somehow they cannot believe that he will forgive smaller sins. The idea of responsibility and inevitable retribution is so strong in their minds that they dwell on what they ought to do and have not done till they forget that God knows their weakness and is ready to pardon and help them. The law of duty weighs heavily on many minds; it did on the minds of the Jews. Therefore Jesus took

occasion to say, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." He would say it to us, if he were here, and saw that we were weighed down by a too crushing sense of responsibility.

The sense of divine forgiveness is necessary every day to give us power to go forward with faith and hope and joy to all new duties; it is part of the daily bread we need. We need to cast all our care on him who careth for us, — our cares of conscience, our feelings of imperfect work, our sense of weakness, our anxiety about doing right; we need to cast all this care on God, and so renew our strength every day.

When Martin Luther was in the cloister, a poor, unknown monk, he was always tormented by a sense of sin. "Oh, my sins, my sins!" he used to cry. A wise friend said to him: "Martin, you repeat every day in your creed, 'I believe in forgiveness of sin,' yet you do not really believe in it. What you really believe is that God forgave David's sin and Peter's sin; but in order to believe in forgiveness you must see that God also forgives Martin Luther's sin." Luther said, "But I am so great a sinner!" The old man answered, "If you were not a real sinner, you would not need a real Saviour." The

whole power of the Reformation came to Luther when he could believe in forgiveness of sin. The power of Paul came to him through the same faith; so it was with Wesley. For the sense of God's love in the soul is life, strength, power, and joy.

O wonderful prayer of Jesus, meeting so simply, so fully, every need of the soul! This one clause which we have made the theme of our meditation this morning brings down heaven to earth, unites the love of God with the love of man, takes away the burden of care, gives us again a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. Let us be forgiven that we may forgive; let us forgive that we may be forgiven.

VI.

AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS.

As we forgive our debtors. — Matt. vi. 12.

THERE are some persons who find it difficult to repeat this petition. They do not see how they can forgive others their offences, and they do not see why they ought to do so. They say if one is behaving dishonestly and unjustly toward you, is secretly slandering you, is trying his best to injure you, how is it possible to forgive him, and treat him as if he were your friend? He is not your friend, but your enemy; and it would be a falsehood to pretend otherwise. Nor would it do him good to forgive him; he would laugh at your forgiveness, and tell you he did not need it or desire it. To treat friends and enemies alike, good and bad alike, is to destroy all moral discrimination, and to confound the boundaries between good and evil. The stern indignation of a righteous man toward an evil-doer is a healthful sentiment; it reminds the bad man that he is separated from the good, that

there is an impassable gulf between them until he repent and return.

All this is so far true that we may say that one cannot be forgiven till he wishes to be forgiven, — till he has some sense of penitence, some consciousness of having done wrong. The father in the parable did not forgive the prodigal son till he returned; he could not do it. He was ready to forgive him; but the son was far away, out of the reach of his love. Neither can we forgive one who does not wish to be forgiven, who will not admit that he is in the wrong.

The conditions of being forgiven, as usually stated in the New Testament, are repentance and faith. We see why these are necessary. It is necessary to feel that we are wrong before we can ask to be forgiven our wrong; and we must believe in God's willingness to forgive before we can seek his forgiveness. But here Jesus makes a new condition: he tells us that we cannot be forgiven unless we forgive. Is not this a little strange? Does it not make ourselves the authors of our own forgiveness? Is it not virtually saying that we are to take the initiative, and that God will imitate us? Is it not causing our poor and weak love to be the condition of his divine

and infinite love? And is not this inconsistent with the rest of the New Testament, which makes penitence and faith the only conditions of forgiveness? Often the sinner has no one to forgive but himself. The prodigal son was forgiven without forgiving any one.

The only answer to these objections seems to be that this condition is no arbitrary rule, but founded in the nature of things; that by the very constitution of the human mind an unforgiving spirit toward man closes the heart to the entrance of God's love. He who refuses to forgive an injury plants himself on justice alone. He says, "The man does not deserve to be forgiven; he has no right to be forgiven." Thus he excludes mercy from his thoughts in the interest of justice. But what right has he himself to be forgiven on grounds of pure justice? How can he escape the logic of his position when he takes his stand on justice and ignores mercy? The reaction of his argument excludes himself from the sphere of forgiving love.

"Forgive and be forgiven" therefore means that an unforgiving spirit toward man closes the heart against the forgiving love of God. What we need is the forgiving spirit, — the readiness

and willingness to forgive wherever it is possible. It need not always be expressed in words; it may show itself in a kind action, in a pleasant look. The spirit of forgiveness is the essential thing.

This forgiving spirit is an essential attribute of great souls. A man is incapable of the highest greatness and heroism who is brooding over his own injuries. Every great man encounters enemies; every great reformer exasperates some opponents. Such men as Emerson, Garrison, Theodore Parker, Charles Sumner, and Washington himself were the objects of calumny and misrepresentation. If they had spent time and strength in personal disputes, they could not have done their work. They were obliged by their deeper purpose to forget these attacks, and go forward in their career of duty. I do not say that they consciously forgave their enemies; but they passed them by, and went onward to something higher.

We may do people a great deal of good by forgiving them. Forgiveness will sometimes create an answering gratitude and love. "She loved much because she has been forgiven much," said Jesus; "for to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

One of the typical Christian heroes of my time, in whom mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other, was Samuel Joseph May. He was first settled as minister in the town of Brooklyn, Conn. While there, the people of a neighboring town, Canterbury, made a violent opposition to a school for colored girls kept by a Miss Prudence Crandall, and persecuted both teacher and pupils, trying to drive them out of the town. Mr. May, always the champion of the oppressed, undertook the defence of Miss Crandall, and publicly supported her, standing by her side and rebuking the cruel prejudice of the people. To us to-day it seems incredible that there should be such opposition to a respectable private school, conducted quietly, and interfering with no one; but in those days the prejudice against the free colored people was as bitter in the North as in the South. A townsman and parishioner of Mr. May was a prominent leader of the attack on Miss Crandall's school; and in the public meetings where Mr. May defended her this man abused Mr. May in the grossest manner, and refused to speak to him when they met. Time passed; and one day, as Mr. May

was driving past this man's house, he saw him at work in his garden among his fruit. Stopping his horse, Mr. May called to him and said: "What beautiful melons you have! I am going to ask you to give me one for my wife, who is very fond of melons." The man looked up, and said: "Mr. May, I will give you a basketful, and bring them round to you myself." Nothing was said about repentance or forgiveness, but from that time they were good friends again.

I have told this little story to call your attention to two facts which it illustrates. One is that the power of forgiving love can be manifested without any formal statement. Mr. May showed the man that he had forgiven him, not in words, not even by doing him a kindness, but by asking a kindness from him. The man instantly felt, "If he asks me a favor, he cannot be angry with me."

The other point is the power of forgiving love in doing away with alienation and hostility. It calls out what latent good there is in a man's nature; it shows him that if he is willing to repent and be reconciled, there is no obstacle in the way. This opponent of Mr. May had probably long been sorry for his conduct, but was

too proud or too timid to make the first advances; but the sunny kindness of Mr. May's face and words melted away his doubts, and brought out all his good feelings.

But how can I love a man whom I believe to be unlovely? How can I love a bad man, whose life is all wrong?

The answer to this is that you cannot love him if you think his life all wrong, if you believe him corrupt to the centre. But is any man corrupt to the centre? Do not judge him by his actions merely, but by your own experience. When you do wrong, do you love the wrong? Do you not, in the depth of your soul, hate the wrong you are doing? Are you frozen hard in evil down to the centre? If you are not, why do *you* think *he* is? Is not that true of us all which the poet says of the river in winter?—

> "The deepest ice that ever froze
> Can only o'er the surface close;
> The living stream runs quick below,
> And flows, and shall forever flow."

It is not enough to "do to others as we would have them do to us." The rule goes deeper. We must feel for others as we would have them feel for us; we must think of others as we would

have them think of us. We know as regards ourselves the truth of Paul's experience: "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do;" "When I would do good, evil is present with me." "The spirit is willing," said Jesus; "the flesh is weak." All men in the depths of their souls love good, and not evil. Believe that of your neighbor, and you can not only forgive him, but love him.

To forgive your enemy is to have a spirit of good-will toward him, to believe in his deeper nature, to feel toward him as you wish God to feel toward you; it is to be in sympathy with the infinite love. Whenever we are in communion with God, we are also in communion with man.

During the storm of the past week we had an instance of one of the curious complications arising out of modern civilization. Boston and New York were wholly separated by the terrible drifts of snow and the frozen rails. The telegraph wires were down; and we were thrown back a hundred years to the time when it took a week for the two cities to communicate. What happened then? We opened a communication with New York by way of London, sending messages under the vast Atlantic. When the frozen

land could not carry our messages, the mighty ocean, "unchangeable save in its wild waves' play," became our medium of communication.

And when the storms of passion and the frosts of selfishness close all communication between our heart and that of our brother man, we may come again into communion with him through the infinite ocean of divine love. "If God so loves us, we ought also to love one another." If God forgives our sin, we can forgive our brother's sin. Before the immensity of that heavenly forgiveness all earthly hostilities fade away and disappear. To forgive our enemy is to feel toward him as we believe that God feels toward us.

To believe in God's forgiving love to ourselves and to forgive others go together; therefore Jesus has put them together in his prayer. And sometimes when we are able to forgive others we feel for the first time that God can forgive us. The true sacrament through which God's love enters our heart is not any outward ceremony, but an act of generous and full forgiveness to those who have done us wrong. When we forgive our enemies, we put ourselves in an attitude of soul by which the forgiveness of God comes to us. When we are hard and unforgiving to

others, we shut up our own hearts against God's love. There is nothing arbitrary in the saying of Jesus, "If you forgive others, God will forgive you; if you do not forgive others, God will not forgive you." It is the simple working of a natural law. The same act which closes our heart against man closes it against God; the same act which opens our heart to those whom we dislike, whom we condemn, whom we believe our enemies, whom we look on as having done us wrong, opens our heart also to God. But we cannot really forgive another until we love him. We can say we forgive him, we can wish him all happiness; but while we remain inwardly alienated, having no real communion with him, we do not forgive him. Jesus says, "Love your enemies;" and anything less than that is not enough. Nothing but genuine love will take the root of bitterness out of our heart.

The work of Christ in the world is to overcome evil with good, hatred with love, war with peace, error with truth. To be a Christian is to be a fellow-worker with Christ in this spirit and method. Therefore we must lay aside bitterness and wrath and evil-speaking and malice, and be kind to one another, forgiving one another, even as God, in Christ, forgives us.

VII.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.

Lead us not into temptation. — Matt. vi. 13.

WE now come to the important petition which we are to consider to-day, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." There are two difficulties which we must briefly consider. The first is, How can God be said to lead us into temptation? since the Apostle James distinctly says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts, and enticed."

The second difficulty is this: Why should we pray to escape temptation, when temptation, regarded as trial, is necessary for the growth of goodness? The Bible says: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, for the trial of your faith maketh patience."

Let us look at these two difficulties. They have led some persons to vary the form, and say,

"Suffer us not to fall into temptation," or "Leave us not in temptation;" and as prayers should first of all be honest, if we cannot believe that God "leads us into temptation," we are right in putting the prayer into a form in which we can honestly offer it.

There is, however, another way of looking at it. Temptation has two sources: one inward, in a man's own desires; the other outward, in surrounding circumstances. If there were no inward desires, there would be no temptation; but if there were no outward opportunity, there would also be no temptation. Now, to the religious mind all outward events come to us by the providence of God. "From him, and through him, and to him are all things." Nothing comes by accident or fate; all events proceed from a divine hand. We are led through every vicissitude of life by our Father. This faith has inspired heroes and martyrs in all ages; but as God guides us, we can ask him not to lead us into trials too hard for us. Just as we pray for daily bread, as we pray for health of body and mind, we may pray him to lead us away from temptation. We may pray not to enter into temptation, because, "though the spirit is will-

ing, the flesh is weak." Temptation and trial come to reveal us to ourselves, to show us our weakness; but if we are already conscious of our weakness, we may justly pray to be saved from the dangers of temptation.

The other difficulty in the text comes from its apparent conflict with that other saying, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;" but this difficulty comes from the equivocal meaning of the Greek word. The true translation is (Revised Version), "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers *trials*." It is trial, not temptation, that we may welcome. We should avoid temptation, but meet trial. Trial is necessary for the development of character. Joy comes to us when we find ourselves strong to endure trial without complaint or weakness or yielding. In our service-book there is a hymn composed by Charles Wesley when he and his friends had been driven by a mob from a town where they were holding a meeting, —

> "'T is my happiness below
> Not to live without the cross."

There is no prayer which we need to utter with more earnestness than this, "Lead us not into

temptation;" and yet often those who need the most to say it are those who think themselves out of the reach of temptation. What tragedies there are in public and private life which confirm the wisdom of the warning, "Let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"!

Within the last few years there has come to us almost every week the same sad tale, repeated again and again. Some man, universally esteemed, trusted by his fellow-citizens, happy in his home, a member of the Christian Church, a teacher in the Sunday-school, prosperous in his circumstances, town treasurer, president of a bank, is found to have used trust funds in private speculation. He has robbed widows and orphans of their whole support; he has plunged the community which trusted him into trouble he has cast a shadow and a shame over the Christian Church. A few years ago, if any on had told him that he was in danger of doin such an act, he would have cried out, "Is th servant a dog, that he should do such a thing? But deep down in his heart lay the strong lust l which he was enticed. He was in a hurry to l rich; he could not wait the slow rewards of ho

est industry. So he said: "No one knows it. It will do no harm. I can easily repay all I borrow. I am sure of success in this speculation. *I* shall be a gainer, and no one else will be a loser." So he went on step by step yielding to temptation, becoming more and more involved, then obliged to take more to save himself, till at last in an hour the storm burst, and he was a disgraced and ruined man.

No man is safe. He who thinks he is safe is most in danger. We are only safe while we pray this prayer. Therefore Jesus says, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." We are like men walking over thin ice, which seems to be solid, but may break in a moment, and plunge us into sudden death.

Temptations are different to different men, — in different situations in life, in different ages, stations, characters. Men may be tempted by their virtues as well as by their vices. The temptation of Jesus, so far as we can understand it, seems to have been his desire to do good; that he so longed to have God's kingdom come. He saw so plainly that by a little concession to the scribes and Pharisees, to Herod or Pilate, he

could accomplish such vast good that he was tempted to be impatient of the slow process of bearing witness to the truth and leaving the result to the distant future.

I suppose that good men are tempted by their very goodness. Virtuous people are tempted by their virtue to be hard to the sinner. Just people are tempted to be inflexible in their judgments on those who were never taught the difference between right and wrong. The strong, who should bear the burdens of the weak, look on the weak with contempt. They say, "We have done our work; why cannot they do theirs?" They cannot understand the temptations of those who yield to every new influence, change with each change of circumstance, and in whom the flesh is weak, — oh, how very weak! These weak persons are they who are described by Paul, who say, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which I will, I find not." These are they who make good resolutions only to break them; who serve God with their mind and heart, and love what is good and pure, but who find a law in their members bringing them into captivity to the evil within them. The lower nature rebels against the higher, and they live in a hell

of inward warfare. If they only could do right always, they would be happy; if they only did wrong and forgot all about right, they would have some sort of blind content; but they live now in a perpetual war with themselves, and so have no rest, no hope. Beneath the smooth surface of society how many such tragedies are being acted! The world knows nothing of them; all seems fair and bright to the superficial observer.

Every man has his peculiar temptation, according to his special tastes, habits, qualities. He should therefore know himself. Self-knowledge alone can make us watch against our besetting sin. The strong man is tempted to be imperious, overbearing, self-willed, a tyrant in his home, — to be a petty despot wherever he goes. If he yields to this, he grows more hard, self-confident, self-relying; and then perhaps there comes some sudden disaster to make him see his fault, and to find how he has alienated his friends by his pride and self-esteem so as to be left alone when calamity comes on him. His prayer every day should have been, "Lead me not into the temptation of pride, arrogance, and self-sufficiency." Such a prayer might have saved him.

And another may be tempted in just the opposite way: his temptation is good-nature. He cannot refuse a request; he cannot say, "No;" he promises everything to every one, and then cannot keep his promises; he grows insincere; he loses sight of truth, and perhaps at last finds himself indulging in falsehoods, — all because he did not pray against this temptation born of his good-nature.

No one is able to say, "Lead me not into temptation," till he has been through temptation. In the mouth of an innocent child that clause of the Lord's Prayer has very little meaning. He does not know yet what temptation is. But when a man has been tempted and yielded, or tempted and fought hard and conquered; when he has learned to know by deep and sad experience his own besetting sins; learned to know how hard it is to meet and battle with the daily trials of life; learned his own defects of temper, of resolution; learned how often when his resolutions were good, his conduct has been bad, when his spirit was willing, his flesh was weak, — then he knows how to pray that prayer from the very depths of his soul, and he has a right to pray it. He has already attained the self-knowledge which temp-

tation gives, and therefore may pray not to be tempted any more.

It is of little use to ask God not to lead us into temptation if we lead ourselves into temptation. A large part of our wisdom and virtue consists in putting ourselves into circumstances favorable to goodness, in not exposing ourselves or others to too great temptations.

Many of the defalcations which have shocked us have arisen from the fact that men were exposed to temptations too strong for them. They did not watch themselves, and were not watched by others. The directors of banks and manufacturing corporations did not direct; the examiners did not examine; the overseers did not oversee. Thus the officers of these institutions did as they chose, and the temptation was too great for them. If the directors had done their duty, the sin and misery would have been prevented.

The other day, in a railroad train, I was talking with a gentleman on this subject. He was not a theologian, but a lawyer; but I found his notions very sensible and suggestive. He thought that for moral health, as for physical health, exercise was good, but exposure was bad. A certain

amount of temptation was good for men, — such as they had power to resist; that was exercise, and healthful; but make temptation too great, and it becomes exposure, and is unhealthful. We have no right to expose our own character or that of another to too great risks.

This seems to me to be a very just distinction. It is necessary that we should be exercised by trials, but not exposed to those which are too severe. Every man has his measure of resistance-power; less than this strain he can bear; to more than this he is in danger of yielding. True wisdom, then, consists in a right adjustment of circumstances. We must have temptation and trial enough to exercise us, not so much that we shall be likely to give way to it; and one advantage of temptation is that it shows us just how much we can bear and how much not.

This petition, "Lead us not into temptation," comes near the end of the Lord's Prayer, since it is one of the last which we learn to pray honestly, from the depths of the soul. To know oneself enough to say it sincerely is one of the highest attainments of man. When we can earnestly and truly say, "Lead me not into temptation," we may have risen above the need

of temptation. We have then dug deep, and laid the foundation of our character on the rock of self-knowledge. We then can, with God's help, guard ourselves against evil, we can avoid needless risks; for we know that we are weak, and so we become strong.

VIII.

DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

Deliver us from evil. — Matt. vi. 13.

IN this passage the Revised Version has made a change which is no improvement on the common version. It makes Jesus say, "Deliver us from the evil one," assuming that he believed in a personal devil.

There is no reason in the Greek for making the change, and it is unlikely that in the time of Jesus the Jews generally believed in a personal devil. No such character is to be found in the Old Testament. The Satan of the Book of Job is a servant of God, whose business is not to tempt but to test human virtue; and where the word "devil" occurs in the New Testament, a personification of evil seems to be intended rather than a person. If Jesus had believed in a personal devil, he would not have been likely to say, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" or to have called Peter

"Satan." In fact the word "devil" seems to represent any one who tempts to evil, or who brings a false accusation. Thus certain women in the Church are in the Greek called devils, though our translators have judiciously rendered the word "false accusers."

But Jesus was no mere optimist. To him evil was a reality, and a very serious one. He did not believe in any eternal hell, to exist forever by the side of heaven under the control of a being such as Milton has described. To him, to oppose and conquer evil was the work of life.

The power in Jesus which has made him the spiritual leader of mankind was his unconquerable faith that truth was stronger than error, right more mighty than wrong, and that all evil shall at last be overcome by good. This has been the strength and confidence of his followers in all times. Jesus has inspired the hope of the coming day, when our life shall not be half light and half shadow, sometimes seeing and loving God, and then forgetting him; but when we shall live in the constant sense of communion with him, when our heart shall escape from its selfishness into that love which abides, unchanging and eter-

nal. Then the evil in us shall be overcome by good; our religion shall not consist of relapses and revivals, but be like the coming of a June morning, when the faint auroral light steadily deepens and widens, shining more and more unto the perfect day.

This hope of entire deliverance from evil is a part of our Christian faith; it is what we need. We need to believe that the evil in us and around us is temporal, and is one day to be swallowed up in good. In this world or in some other world we are to reach a state in which there shall be no more sin, no more wilful or careless disobedience to the divine light, no more remorse, no more unkindness, no more falsehood, no more sinking of heart and sickness of soul over the wrongs and woes of time. There may always be trials, but there need be no more temptations; always, perhaps, mistakes, but no more sin. Evil in its real nature will disappear; for Christ shall reign till all things are subject to him, and then all things will be subject to heavenly truth and heavenly love; then the divine power of Jesus will be seen to be one with his divine generosity. As he goes up to God, he will come nearer to men; and when he reigns over all

things, it will be by becoming more entirely and fully the helper, brother, and friend of all mankind.

It is a remarkable fact that the Lord's Prayer contains no allusion to the atonement, nor to the expiatory sacrifice of Christ, nor to forgiveness for his sake. It does not say, "Forgive us our trespasses for the sake of Christ," or "because of his atoning blood." We may, therefore, repeat the prayer which Jesus himself has taught us, and know nothing of the atonement any more than of the Trinity. If these were essential parts of Christian experience, would the Master have omitted them when teaching his disciples how they ought to pray? Would he have said nothing of doctrines which have been considered by the Orthodox Church as the most vital truths of Christian piety?

One or two words about the doxology. Most prayers in ancient liturgies were closed by a doxology, or ascription of praise and glory to God; but that this doxology is one of the oldest appears from the fact that there is no hint of the Trinity in it.

I have a book containing some very ancient liturgies, though far less old than the time of the

apostles. In these all the doxologies have some trace of the Trinity. One of them, called "The Divine Liturgy of James," closes the Lord's Prayer thus: "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever." There is another ancient doxology, called "The Minor Doxology," which we hear chanted in the Episcopal Church: "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." This form dates back only to the end of the Arian controversy. Before that time it simply read, "Glory to the Father, and Son, and Spirit, forever;" and it was allowable then to read and sing it, "Glory to the Father, in the Son, and through the Holy Spirit," which is a purely Unitarian form. But the doxology at the close of the Lord's Prayer is the oldest of all, and is so old that we have no trace of its origin. It is later than the time of Christ, and yet earlier than the first beginnings of the doctrine of the Trinity.

This fact shows how little attention Christian piety pays to dogmatic theology. Orthodox the-

ology draws a sharp line between inspired and uninspired writings; according to it the Bible alone is inspired; and yet the Church from the earliest times, in repeating its most sacred prayer, — a prayer which came from Christ himself, — has always added a doxology which certainly was never in the original Bible, and comes from no one knows where. It has done this because it is a good and suitable termination of the prayer; and if the anonymous author knows that during these long centuries the Church has united his words with those of Christ in its daily prayers, I think he is glad that in this doxology he has ascribed all glory to God, and that his own name has never been placed near that of his Master.

Thus we see that this wonderful prayer is as deep as it is simple, as full as it is brief; that it is enough for all our needs, and is never exhausted, but fresh and filled evermore with new life. As we know more and more of life, and penetrate deeper into ourselves, we feel more and more its adaptation to all our wants. It will never grow old, and never be outworn, and is in itself a proof of the wonderful inspiration of

the soul which out of these five loaves and two fishes, these seven simple petitions, has made food enough for the souls of all races, nations, and varieties of human experience through all time.

THE END.